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AUTHOR Gill, Judith; Howard, Sue

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ABSTRACT

This paper approaches the issue of national identity in terms of a felt recognition of belonging and a desire to identify with a place, such as Australia. Drawing on the Sydney Olympic Opening Ceremony's representations of national identity, the paper argues that a new sense of the legitimacy of diverse nationalisms and ethnicities of origin and destination is replacing the traditional, hegemonic version of what it means to be Australian. The paper notes that, traditionally, the school played a large part in the formation of national identity through various practices designed to induce a sense of national pride and loyalty. It describes conducting a study with urban primary school children of diverse backgrounds (n=80) and exploring the affective dimensions of what it currently means to belong and to feel a sense of affiliation towards Australia. It states that the study found that children who participated expressed a sense of national belonging and pride different from and similar to traditional expressions of national allegiance and their enthusiasm for exploring these issues was palpable. The paper concludes by suggesting that schools do continue to play a role in nation building, not by returning to the practices of the past, but by making space for young people to explore and negotiate their own complex responses to the concept of national identity. (Contains a 16 references.) (BT)

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Somewhere To Call Home?
Schooling And A Sense Of Place And Belonging In An Increasingly Globalised World

Judith Gill and Sue Howard
University of South Australia

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Introduction

This paper approaches the issue of national identity in terms of a felt recognition of belonging and of desire to identify with a place - in this instance, Australia. Drawing on the Sydney Olympic Opening Ceremony's representations of national identity, we argue that a new sense of the legitimacy of diverse 'nationalisms' and of ethnicities of both 'origin' and 'destination' (Castan 1994) is replacing the traditional, hegemonic version of what it means to be Australian.

Traditionally, the school unashamedly played a large part in the formation of national identity through various practices designed to induce a sense of national pride and loyalty. As described by Lawn:

> Most of all they [education systems] were managed through a conceptual discourse in which the purpose and structure of the system, teacher identity, and national identity were all bound together in a constant refrain that built the education service and cultural identity every day.
>
> (Lawn 2001:174)

To this end, selective versions of Australian history and literature were taught in the formal school curriculum and ritualised behaviours such as flag-raising, oaths of loyalty and anthem singing were regular features of school life. While in recent times these practices have largely disappeared, it seems that the school is left in a kind of ideological limbo, torn between the need to recognise students' various histories and allegiances (including those of indigenous peoples) on the one hand and a desire to promote loyalty to a common set of 'Australian' values on the other. Too often, it seems, the contradictions and complexities of such a position have led to an embarrassed silence wherein issues relating to the 'national' have largely been avoided.

Working with primary school children, we set out to explore the affective dimensions of what it now means 'to belong' and to feel a sense of affiliation towards the collectivity we call Australia. We found that the children who participated in this study expressed a sense of national belonging and pride both different from and similar to traditional expressions of national allegiance. Moreover, their enthusiasm for exploring these issues was palpable. We conclude by suggesting that schools do still have a role to play in nation building - not by returning to the practices of the past, but by making space for young people to explore and negotiate their own complex responses to the 'national'.

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National Identities

Anderson's concept of the nation being an'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) is a useful one for understanding the difficulties facing settler/post-colonial societies as they attempt to create a common identity. This 'imagined community' - a constructed intersubjectivity - has been described as 'a feeling shared by a mass of people that they all belong to a grouping which in important ways gives meaning to their lives' (Castan 1994: 121). This meaning revolves around a powerful need for human-scale community and seems to be of a different order from those meanings that attach to global community membership. In Australia, the version of national identity that emerged to serve this need for community was, according to Turner (1994: 5): '... prescriptive, unitary, masculinist and excluding'. Many writers share this view and agree that it is a construct in urgent need of repair and/or disposal (e.g. Magarey, Sheridan and Rowley 1993; Castan 1994; Castles, Kalantzis et al. 1988; Ferres and Meredyth 2001). The task, as they see it, is to create a sense of national identity that simultaneously recognizes, includes and negotiates the complexities of tradition and ethnicity not only of successive waves of immigrants since 1788 but also of indigenous peoples who were subsequently dispossessed.

Other voices call for a move beyond the national, claiming that the concept of 'nation' is counter productive in a heterogeneous settler society such as contemporary Australia (Kalantzis 1996). There is even a move in some quarters to argue that the nation as a concept has outlived its usefulness and that we should concentrate on promoting the notion of a borderless global world in which people's subjective awarenesses are more fluid and less tied to place, language or system of government (Tishkov 2000). All of these positions carry implications for schooling and give rise to the question of the degree to which the school should consciously participate in the development of a national consciousness among students. Questions such as this form the impetus for the current investigation.

The Olympic Opening Ceremony - A Medal-Winning Event

Writing in 1994, Turner suggested that the Sydney Olympics (then to take place six years hence) had the potential to be a nation-building event, affording the opportunity to both dispose of outdated nationalisms and to redefine and re-negotiate our sense of who we are. In particular, he suggested the Olympic Opening Ceremony could be the stage for demonstrating this new set of signifiers to the rest of the world:

> It is undeniable that modern nations are built through ... moments of high spectacle. As Sydney 2000 is going to happen, then, it is worth thinking about how it could be turned in a progressive direction. As a nation-building exercise, the Games provides an opportunity for Australians to activate the 'use by' date on our traditional nationalisms and attempt to establish a more heterogeneous and socially grounded set of signifiers for the nation. I would like to think that the opening ceremony - traditionally the place where the host nation signifies its identity through spectacle - is the location where this could occur. (Turner 1994: 143)

While many may have shared Turner's hopes, few could have felt terribly optimistic. After the winking kangaroo of the 1982 Commonwealth Games; the Coca Cola and Telstra logos on the sails of the tall ships as they entered Sydney harbour during the Bicentennial celebrations in 1988 and

the plastic blow-up kangaroos on bicycles at the preview of the Sydney Olympics in Atlanta in 1996, many Australians lived, we suspect, in a state of cringing fearfulness as the time for the Sydney Opening Ceremony approached. Many would have believed the image we would present to the rest of the world would continue to be backward-looking (Gallipoli, famous historical figures, founding fathers), clichéd and sentimental (kangaroos, koalas and crocodiles) and monocultural (Lawson's laconic, irreverent bush larrikins exuding mateship). The opening moments of the Ceremony, arresting though they were, seemed to be pointing in just that direction. One hundred and twenty mounted stock riders - RMW booted, Akubra-hatted and Drizabone-coated - thundered up and down the arena celebrating a way of bush life that the vast majority of the population has never and will never experience. Then it became clear that the spectacle's ensuing narrative was not going to continue relying on signifiers of Australian-ness that were well beyond - in Turner's terms - their 'use- by' date.

For many, the Olympic Opening Ceremony's spectacle spoke about who we are in ways that we had not encountered before. It largely jettisoned the backward-looking, the cliched and the monocultural and instead foregrounded Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people; the young and the old; men and women and immigrants from everywhere. It featured Aboriginal custom and ceremony and acknowledged the right of indigenous peoples to welcome the world to Aboriginal land and to preside over the festivities. It told us stories about our struggle to live in a harsh and inhospitable country; our dream of the beach and limitless ocean; our delight in our unique flora and fauna; our ingenuity and industry in agriculture, mining and manufacturing. It also presented us with symbols of the bush (galvanized iron rainwater tanks, windmills), the city and the suburban dream ('Turn your grass into lawn with a Victa Mower!'). The past was not banished - Ned Kelly was there (the Sidney Nolan version) and Captain Cook (in a boat resembling one of the cartoonist, Bruce Petty's, amazing bicycles) but both were presented ironically, playfully - there was no false reverence or triumphalism here.

Most memorably, Australia's immigrant peoples came together on floats representing the Olympic rings and thus the 5 continents of the world. The floats locked together and unfolded into a huge scaffolded work-site where the (tap-dancing) immigrant workers in their Blundstone boots and flannel shirts constructed the Sydney Harbour Bridge and, by inference, the rest of contemporary Australia .

There is no question in our minds that this representation of our national identity was designed as much for us as it was for the rest of the world - there were, after all, things that only we could understand. Reports in the foreign press suggest people in other countries were mystified by the image of the Olympic rings comprising 150 2-stroke Victas doing formation-mowing and by our apparent obsession with corrugated iron and tap-dancing! But we weren't. Most of us knew the significance of these things. Moreover, we could recognize ourselves in our diversity and our ordinariness; in our histories - individual and shared; in our achievements and sheer hard work. We could celebrate what Kalantzis (1992-3: 3) sees as one of our virtues '[that]we have got so much done, and done in a peace that is all too rare in the world'. Another 'virtue' that seemed very apparent to us was that these stories could be told and understood without recourse to tub-thumping nationalism. The sense of humour, the teasing, the playfulness and irony with which our stories were told were continuously apparent in the exuberant informality that characterised the ceremony – for evidence, one only has to think of James Morrison's cheeky swing version of *Waltzing Matilda*; the satirical big-screen depiction of legendary swimming coach Laurie Laurence in full

cry; the irreverent depiction of Captain Cook (with a rabbit in a cage!) and the tap-dancing construction workers.

Certainly, there were absences and silences - *terra nullius* and the atrocities committed under the guise of this belief were absent. And while Aboriginal people were an integral part of the story, as one of our indigenous colleagues observed, 'Yeah, we were there, but they left us is in the Dreamtime'. The White Australia policy and the shame of racism were ignored. The divisions of class, wealth and gender, the inequalities of rural and urban life - all of these were glossed over. And one can argue that this was maybe not the very public time or place to explore these things in any depth. The real achievement of this re-working of national identity was that it captured changes in perception and understanding that have been slowly occurring so that more Australians than ever before could recognise at least some aspect of themselves and their lives in this spectacle. In making this possible, spaces have been opened up for exploring different senses of belonging to the collective while recognizing, in broad terms, shared life patterns, a shared sense of place, a shared sense of contribution to the nation and some shared values.

Amid the general euphoria about the success of the Games ceremonies, commentators noted the role that education and the increasingly multicultural population had played in the production of this new, expanded set of identities. Here, for example, is Janet McCalman writing in the Melbourne **Age** newspaper:

> … the talent that would flow forth in an ever-growing stream after the early 1970s would come from the children of migrants, especially non-English speaking ones, from indigenous Australians, from women and from working class kids who made it through an expanded secondary and tertiary education system.
>
> … Australia has turned into an exciting, creative, funny and stylish culture because we have made it possible for talent to be trained and expressed.
>
> (McCalman **The Age** 19/9/2000)

ADULTS AND CHILDREN

Our observations thus far have, of course, been from an adult perspective. The question remains to what degree the current generation of school students is aware of, or shares the transformed notions of identity implicit in the images and performances presented by the Opening Ceremony. Relatedly, what role is there for the school in this new construction of the meaning of 'being Australian'?

A whole literature exists exploring the development of nationalist feelings in different populations of adults (see for example: Anderson 1983; De Cillia et al. 1999; Penrose 1993) but little exists in relation to how these feelings develop in children. A British study by Carrington and Short (1995) and our own previous work (Howard and Gill 2001), found that primary school aged children were largely unconcerned about what it means to be British or Australian. In our own study, the largely Anglo-Australian participants listed various things they associated with Australia (largely drawn from popular culture, tourism and advertising) and they explained what they thought the rules of citizenship were, but an affective response - an articulation of a sense of belonging to a place - was

not expressed. Since that study, Australia has been through some very heavily publicised and widely broadcast national events including the debate about the Republic; the Sorry Day marches and issues to do with Aboriginal Reconciliation; the celebrations surrounding the Millennium and the spectacle and international competition of the Sydney Olympics. While these debates and events certainly forced many adult Australians to re-think their values and their sense of what 'being Australian' meant, we were keen to see whether these experiences had altered or shaped our young respondents' attitudes and feelings in this regard.

THE STUDY

We collected two kinds of data in two separate urban primary schools, both of which had students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. One of the schools is very proud that it has 43 different 'ethnicities of origin' (Castan 1994) represented within its school population.

In all, 80 ten - twelve year old students (Grades 6 and 7) took part in the study. Thirty five (20 boys and 15 girls), undertook a written task that asked them to complete the sentence: *Being Australian means...* Forty five students (21 girls and 24 boys) took part in small focus group discussions where the key questions explored what *'being Australian'* meant to them. The focus groups were conducted immediately after the Olympics in 2000 and the written task was undertaken in early 2001. NUD*IST Vivo (QSR 1998-9) was used to assist in the management of the data and in the task of analysis.

FINDINGS

- *Uniqueness*

As in our earlier study (Howard and Gill, 2000), we found that our respondents were quick to interpret the question of what *being Australian* meant to them as an opportunity to list all those things that they uniquely associated with the country. In doing so, many children, like Carl (11 yrs) hint at pride in the uniquenesses they identify: *'Nowhere else in the world has gum trees except us'*. Animals and landscape feature strongly here with kangaroos and koalas, rainforest and the outback/bush all being mentioned. The beach (interestingly, an important element picked up in the Olympic Opening Ceremony) was mentioned most frequently by the children as one of the clear positives about life in Australia: *'We have great beaches to swim in'* (Andrea 10yrs).

Being Australian, for these children, was often associated with unique places like Ayers Rock (Uluru), the Barrier Reef, Sydney's harbour bridge and the Opera House. Interestingly, for children living in South Australia, the things they chose were often located outside their own state. Here, for example, is one group of three girls who decided their way of showing what it meant to be Australian would be to design a collage. On it, they would include unique animals, landscape and famous places with the only South Australian contribution being a new store that had recently opened (with much fanfare) in the city of Adelaide (David Jones):

Inez (12 yrs):	[The collage] is in the shape of Australia and then I'd get like ... Sydney harbour bridge and Ayers Rock and like all Aussie animals, like kangaroos and koalas and that and coastline like Lizzie said and all that kind of stuff.
Lizzie (11 yrs):	People patting animals.
Ngyuen (11 yrs):	Okay, people laughing having fun in Australia.
Lizzie:	Aboriginals for the homeland like...

Inez:	We could like draw half of the bridge and then half of the Opera House or whatever it is, like part bridge and then the rest of it is the Opera House, I don't know, just like join bits on to everything and become a funny picture.
Lizzie:	You need bush land.
Ngyuen:	And the new David Jones.
Lizzie:	I've been there.
Inez:	I'd say a picture of the beach.
Lizzie:	Canberra.

The domination of east coast 'icons' in children's consciousness about Australia was a feature of our data in the previous study and can be linked to a pervasive centralism in Australian government and business affairs, tourist publicity and cultural imagery. The actual state – South Australia – its name, its places, its leaders didn't rate a mention in any of the children's discussions about being Australian. It seemed that the state as a governmental structure did not impact on their sense of felt response to the country as a whole. The children seemed to be saying "we are Australians" rather than South Australians or Victorians or Queenslanders – even though some of them had lived in other states prior to moving to South Australia.

'Playing a lot of sport' (Serge 11 yrs) and being *'...passionate about sport'* (Robert 12 yrs) were recurrent themes, but chiefly in the boys' identification of what *being Australian* means. All kinds of sports and a wide variety of Australian sporting personalities were identified, however, Aussie Rules football was seen as uniquely and proudly Australian: *'There are things that make Australia unique though, such as the way we play football. Nowhere else in the world will you find Aussie Rules.'* (Martin 12 yrs).

While it was true that the boys appeared more likely than the girls to volunteer sport - being able to play it and be good at it - as a key feature of *being Australian*, this emphasis no doubt also derived in part from the recent Olympic Games. All of the children had watched at least some of the spectacle and some of them had relatives or friends who had gone to Sydney to attend the Games. There were interesting discussions of whom one supported, especially in the case of young people well aware of multiple allegiances within their families. For Tony, *'being born'* somewhere clearly confers some kind of obligation of loyalty and allegiance, however *'living'* somewhere also makes demands on allegiance too. Here he discusses the tricky balancing act that his father (born in England) had to manage during Olympic events where Australia and Britain were both competing:

Tony (11 yrs):	I was born here and it's my country and in everything at the Olympics you go for Australia because you were born here. Yeah - my Dad goes for Britain because he was born there even though he's living here now. But that depends on who's competing 'cos if Australia are, he'll go for them, but if it's like Britain and no-one from Australia, then he'll barrack for Britain.

It seems as though sport does assist young people to feel part of a larger community and that it can function to rope people in to the larger project of 'nation' - such was the response from some of

our young informants. There is of course a direct parallel with the ways in which sport and competitive games function in schools to recruit students to 'play for school'.

- *Absences*

If, for these children, *being Australian* was, to a degree, associated with unique elements of Australian landscape and culture, the reverse was also true. On many occasions the children identified *being Australian* with the absence of certain things. In other words, Australia didn't have undesirable features they associated with other parts of the world.

In Australia, according to our young informants, there is no overcrowding: *'Australia is not a crowded place. There's plenty of spaces and we don't have parking all over the place'*(Barney 10 yrs) and *'All the space you can have. You can have your own house and not live in an apartment'* (Thea 11 yrs). We have no poverty: *'Our country has hardly any poverty and there are not many people without a home to go to.'* (Owen 11 yrs). We have no famine: *'We don't starve like some poor Africans do.'*(Angela 11 yrs). Most important of all these absences, however, was the absence of war. This was a most frequently mentioned feature: *'I love living in Australia because there are no wars that go on within Australia.'* (Charles 11 yrs) and *'We don't have to go through things like East Timor did."* (Mirella 12 yrs).

Of course this position reflects a fairly naïve estimate of the 'boundless plains to share' and, given recent events, possibly an over-optimistic view of Australia's peaceful status. It is clear, however, that even though these claims are about what Australia is not, they nevertheless offer a strong rationale for positive feelings about *being Australian.*

- *Issues of Diversity*

The children all attended schools with a wide range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. In discussion they showed an awareness of this diversity and a pride in the fact that: *'Australia is a multicultured nation'* (Dianna 10 yrs) that we had not noted in talking with young people in the more homogeneous schools of our previous study. Here is an exchange in one group:

Angela (11 yrs):	We are like, we're all countries just joined together.
David (11 yrs):	Yeah, we're in the reunion thing.
Jasper (11 yrs):	People who come from other countries come to Australia and become Australian. Australia is a multicultural nation and even though people speak other languages and have different beliefs they are still Australian.

Others express their pride more directly. Harriet (10 yrs) is one of many to claim that she likes being Australian because: *'...there are a lot of cultures and like in my school there is 43 different cultures, which I think is great!'.*

In many discussions the children brought up issues to do with Aboriginal people. This group shows an awareness of the history of Aboriginal/European conflict:

Tony (11 yrs):	We're all different.
Arturo (10yrs):	Some are Aboriginal.

Avril (10 yrs)	Most are European, cos when the Europeans settled, they wiped out most of the Aboriginals I think. That's why there are not so many now.
Int:	So there are a whole lot of people living here who are Australian.
Arturo:	Partly. You could call them partly Australian. Or you could call them .... I don't know, it depends on what they want to call themselves.

In other groups, the children spoke of the need for reconciliation and appeared familiar with ideas about the need to say 'sorry' in the case of the Stolen Generation. Here Stacey (12 yrs) talks about a picture she would create to represent the kind of people that Australians are:

Int:	What kind of people are we?
Stacey (11 yrs):	We're all different kinds. You'd put like one brown hand and one white hand shaking hands and reconciliation or something.
Int:	So that's a sign that we're lots of different people?
Stacey:	And we'd have the word 'sorry'.
Int:	The word 'sorry'?
Stacey:	Yeah, like there's this thing about 'sorry'.
Int:	What are we saying 'sorry' about?
Stacey:	Like what the government did to take the children away from the Aborigines.

Undoubtedly some of this awareness has come from their school experience – but it has also from exposure to the wider culture. Major public debate about indigenous issues has been a feature of recent times and it is not surprising that the children's views reflect this.

- *The Olympics*

As our focus group discussions took place immediately after the Sydney Olympics, it was inevitable that they would form a popular topic for discussion. We were interested to find that many children recognized and understood the significance of aspects of the Opening Ceremony that we had anticipated would probably mystify them. The meanings surrounding corrugated iron and tap dancing, for example, were well understood by several groups and the inclusion of Aboriginal people was noted by others. Here's what one group thought:

Int:	What did you like about the Opening Ceremony then?
Carla (11 yrs):	I really liked the tap dancers cause it's real Aussie 'cause they're wearing the boots and like outback style.
Owen (11yrs):	Yeah, I liked the people rolling those corrugated iron tanks.
Int:	Yes.
Barney (10 yrs):	And the Aborigines
Carla:	And I reckon the tap dancers are Australian because other countries they have traditional

	costumes and stuff to do dancing in and we're just casual.
Int:	Just wearing our work clothes.
Carla:	Yep.
Int:	And what was the significance of the corrugated iron?
Owen:	Because the first settlers used it a lot when they came here.
Carla:	Well they used water tanks a lot because they were lucky to get any rain.
Barney:	They needed the fresh water.

Another group liked the Aboriginal content as well:

Stephanie (11 yrs):	I like the Opening Ceremony because I liked when the Aborigines did their dance on the stilts and when the big face came out of the ground.
Int:	Yes, that was great wasn't it.
Thea (11 yrs):	They had to drink this stuff so they could breathe fire.
Charles (11 yrs):	I liked the rainwater tanks.
Int:	Why were they there do you think?
Thea:	Outback.
Charles:	Yeah, the outback.
Stephanie:	My Dad's got a rainwater tank

Despite their appreciation of the Opening Ceremony, it was the Closing Ceremony that our participants generally preferred. Here the popular 'icons' that they recognised and enjoyed – pop and film stars and sporting heroes - featured as individual achievers rather than the more distinctly collective orientation of the Opening.

The children were generally sure that the staging of the Olympics had to be a good thing for Australia because they saw it as a chance to showcase Australia to the rest of the world as Jasper (11 yrs) indicates: *'It's good to show the rest of the world what Australians can do.'*

Individual athlete-heroes like Ian Thorpe and Cathy Freeman were mentioned by name and our participants were pleased to see them win but there was a sense of their pleasure being more because they knew them as local identities rather than because they were Australian *per se*. Unlike so many popular depictions of athletes as pseudo-warriors for 'King and country' (viz. *Chariots of Fire*) these children did not talk about the idea or the actuality of winning as some kind of national crowning glory. It was as though these young people had not experienced the Olympics as a world competition so much as a local spectacle.

- *Notes on the written exercise*

While the foregoing analysis drew on both the written data and data transcribed from the focus group discussions, here we wish to comment specifically on aspects of the written data.

When asked to provide a written statement which began with the words *Being Australian means ...* some respondents chose to write in dot points about the virtue of Australia as a place to live – lots of room, no poverty, no wars, unique animals and places. However, many also chose to either begin or end their written statement with an expression of positive affection for the idea of Australia, for example: *'That's why Australia is such a great place to be.'* (John 10 yrs).

There was a sense in which the formality of requiring a written response produced some more formulaic outcomes than had the free flowing discussions. However here too were ideas very similar to those recorded by Cope and Kalantzis (1996) working with much older children. For instance:

> Being Australian means a place of freedom, trust, acceptance and generosity. Australia is a place that lots of people come and make their future life and a better place to live. There's no place like Australia!
>
> (Yr 11 girl, Cope and Kalantzis 1996)

> To me, being Australian means you were born here or have come from another country and lived in Australia for a number of years. If you are Australian you aren't only living in Australia but are part of the country. Some people feel pride when thinking of being Australian – that's what being Australian means to me! (Sarah, 11 yrs, current study)

Did the exercise force their hands to write only of the positive? Maybe so, but in our study one boy offered a well developed account of his view that Australia had forgotten its traditional image and had allowed itself to become overtaken by other newer and less desirable qualities:

> I believe being Australian has lost a lot of meaning over recent years. Up until about the 1950s being an Australian meant you were simple, hard working, honest and very stu[illegible] as well as being kind and very family oriented. I believe this image has become obsolete because of increased communications with other countries such as America which has influenced our culture dramatically. I also believed the diversity of cultures has stretched that image so much that it's up to you whether you want to be an Australian because the people of Australia are so different. (Peter, 12 yrs, current study)

In general, however, the responses from the present study echoed those found by Cope and Kalantzis working with high school students (Cope and Kalantzis, 1996). Like their older counterparts, our young informants had been born into a world in which there was no White Australia Policy, in which questions of reconciliation were high on the agenda and their descriptions of Australian ways were resonant with notions of inclusivity and sharing of resources, even as they acknowledged past injustices to indigenous people.

CONCLUSIONS

Young students such as those involved in our study do have a positive regard for the idea of being Australian, although this does not seem to be a direct result of their formal school experience. Their understanding appears to come from popular cultural meanings and tourism images that present the exotic fauna and physical beauty of this country as its special claim to uniqueness. One respondent also recognises the Paul Hogan character as an Australian trademark even as she knows that he is a caricature:

> Billie (11 yrs): But then again, you can't stereotype Australians and say that we're all Aussie ockers and 'put another shrimp on the barbie, mate', you know, the kangaroos jumping around everywhere.

They are more comfortable talking about concrete things that are Australian, such as buildings, places and animals, rather than what being Australian means to themselves. In the face of a dearth of great events, great leaders, particular causes, sporting heroes appear to emerge as significant in shaping a national psyche – but again the staging of the Sydney Olympics represented a particular case for raising the question of the meaning of being Australian and so it is probably not surprising that sporting heroes came to mind. Our respondents are generally very positive about the idea of being Australian and prone to offer negative images of other places as a way of celebrating Australia's goodness as a place to live. There can be no doubt that their position is one of affinity with the idea of being Australian and that their image of community is very much in tune with the current cultural mix and at odds with the monoculturalism of former generations.

Missing from these accounts about the meaning of being Australian was any reference to Australian history, Australian participation in war (despite the fact that Gallipoli has taken on renewed significance in recent times), national anthem(s), the Queen, a national literature or artistic production. The references to the 'outback' and 'the bush' showed that the children were aware of these traditional Australian reference points, much as the Olympics Opening had featured the stockmen and the Ned Kelly themes. However, as with the Opening performance, the young people used the references and then moved on to depict an Australia that they knew and lived in, a place of good food and wide beaches, where people were friendly and helped one another. In many respects the picture of being Australian offered by these 10, 11 and 12 year olds mapped very closely on to the complex diorama supplied by the Opening Ceremony.

A similar multi-layered conception of the meaning of being Australian informs the displays at the newly opened Museum of Australia in Canberra. Here there is a mix of approaches to issues of identity that appears much more fluidly represented than in traditional museums. Chronology has been largely abandoned in place of thematic representations of aspects of this country's development and its peoples. Most importantly many of the displays are interactive, actively seeking the ongoing involvement of visitors to the museum to understand themselves as having a role to play in the further collecting of narratives of the many and various ways of being Australian. The degree of controversy that has attended the opening of this Museum suggests that the reconfiguring of the meaning of being Australian is fairly controversial. Older commentators in particular have been quick to criticise the displays for their radical and confrontating nature. What we have shown here, using the voices of our young informants and the images from the Olympics spectacle is that new versions of being Australian are already abroad and education at all levels is obliged to take account of them.

Implications for Curriculum

Our data support the call for schools to encourage reflection on the meaning of being Australian as part of the knowledge package on offer to all students. Our informants were definitely not 'beyond nation' or 'pre-nation' and in fact had absorbed more of a sense of 'the national' than we had originally anticipated. This is not to say that we urge a return to earlier forms of nation-building in schools. Rather we see it useful for the school to offer a transformative approach that continually makes and remakes understandings of Australianness in terms of particular issues. Such a concept may well turn tradition on its head – rather than the usually chronologically ordered history, it may be more productive to start with investigations of the current picture of Australia and its people and then work back to gain a greater understanding of origins and stories. By 2001 multiculturalism has itself been transformed – no longer satisfied with mere inclusivity, the current multicultural edge demands that differences be celebrated and configured in dynamic relation to the acknowledgment of shared hopes and values.

There are issues here too for teacher education, which should incorporate Australian Studies courses into the standard preparation for working in Australian schools, especially given that teacher populations are still less heterogeneous than the student communities.

In this paper we have argued for schooling to take account of the current social composition of Australia and to take a leading educative role in the development of this settler society. We urge schools to provide a space within the formal curriculum in which recognition of difference is promoted, along with the development of widespread understanding of those values that can be shared – we suggest that 'making a contribution', 'peace', 'acceptance of others', 'enjoyment of life', 'a shared sense of place' might be good starting points here. One of these shared values is that people come from different places and bring different customs, languages and attitudes into the rich mix that is contemporary Australia. In this we echo Lawn's vision of education's role in the creation of the new knowledge economy within a newly configured Europe:

> ...this new space for education exists today ... as a necessary element in the building of shared identity [...] The space can be described as fluid, heterogeneous and polymorphic yet it is recognisably a new space. It exists within the daily work of teachers and policy makers ...
>
> (Lawn 2001:174)

Coda

The Tampa Crisis and the events of September 11th, 2001 in the United States may well have affected the ways in which children understand their world and their place in it. Most young Australians will have seen the images of the Tampa's boat-load of refugees being turned away from Australia. Even more will have seen the US images of the hijacked planes on their suicidal missions, the burning buildings collapsing, people running in fear for their lives and the grief of the many who lost relatives and close ones. More than ever before the young people with whom we spoke will have had cause to realise the degree of violence and mass destruction of which people are capable. Theirs is an increasingly globalised world and communications technology has ensured that they are able to identify with Manhattan and Washington in ways more concrete than Benedict Anderson's notion of the imagined community ever envisaged. Just how these events will have affected their sense of belonging to Australia, of seeing Australia as a safe haven, quarantined

from the violence and atrocity of other parts of the world or as a tolerant country that welcomes people from other countries is as yet unknown.

In the fluid conception of the 'national' for which we have been arguing in this paper, it is conceivable that degrees of allegiance to nation will vary along with particular world events. Like some of our young informants we have pressed for a transformative sense of national identity that permits and even encourages the potential for multiple allegiances rather than a unitary exclusive one. It is thus conceivable to be Australian and Greek, Australian of Chinese origin, Italo-Australian and so on. Just how the sense of multilayered identities and national allegiances will be able to play out in a world conflicted by violence and destruction is not knowable from our data. We do, however, remain convinced that a schooling more actively involved in developing a revitalised sense of Australian community which recognises itself as comprised of a mix of peoples joined in a desire to live in harmony is the most effective preparation for a stable and healthy society for the future.

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Organization: UNIV. of South Australia
Address: SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNDERDALE CAMPUS
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